

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Most Businesses Pass Tobacco Compliance Test

BISMARCK, N.D. – The North Dakota Department of Human Services announced today that a random survey of licensed tobacco retailers across the state found retailers complying with laws that prohibit the sale of tobacco products to minors.

In 2005, 92.2 percent of the randomly surveyed licensed tobacco retail sites passed compliance checks, and 7.8 percent violated the law by selling tobacco products to teens. According to the department's Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, which monitors compliance, violations were up 1.6 percent from 2004 because four additional retailers failed the compliance check in 2005.

The department randomly surveyed 219 of the 838 licensed retail sites. The sample excluded bars and places where it is illegal for a teen to enter. Four 15-year-olds, supervised by adults, made 219 attempted purchases of tobacco products. Purchase attempts were made in 52 counties, and the teens were successful 17 times.

Division of Mental Treatment Services Administrator Kris Storbeck said, "We urge retailers to continue to check identifications. We appreciate their efforts."

North Dakota has made significant progress addressing the sale of tobacco to minors. Prior to 2000, the state's noncompliance rate exceeded 50 percent. In 2001, it fell to 16.8 percent, and it has been below 10 percent for the past four years.

Commenting on the results, Kathleen Mangskau, Director of the North Dakota Department of Health's Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control said, "It is important to remain diligent in our efforts to reduce tobacco use among youth. Parents, businesses, and all adults in our communities share a responsibility to help limit youth access to tobacco products. Each year about 1,000 minors in North Dakota become new regular daily smokers."

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Federal law (the Synar Amendment) requires all states that receive Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) block grant funding to conduct annual scientific surveys employing youth to conduct test purchases at licensed retail sites. States with noncompliance rates over 20 percent risk losing up to 40 percent of their SAPT block grant funding. North Dakota receives about \$5.2 million annually from this block grant.

The Department of Human Services notified businesses of their individual results. In addition, states attorneys were notified of inspection results in their counties. The division is not involved in enforcement, but is charged with monitoring for the purpose of targeting prevention programs more effectively. The ease in obtaining tobacco products contributes to the incidence of use among youth.

For more information about the survey, contact Kris Storbeck, Treatment Services Administrator, Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, N.D. Department of Human Services at 701-328-8982, or at sostok@state.nd.us.

For information about local tobacco use prevention programs, contact Kathleen Mangskau, Director, Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control, N.D. Department of Health, at 701-328-4517, or at kmangska@state.nd.us.

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